Amendments to the Specification

Please replace paragraph [0030] with the following amended paragraph:

[0030] The gripping means 22 include first and second branches 66a, 66b extending longitudinally from the distal end portion 24b of the body 20 and terminating in a distal end 68a, 68b. Each branch includes a flexible center 64a, 64b portion and two rigid side portions ~~60a~~61a, 62a, ~~60b~~61b, 62b. The center portion 64 is integrally formed from narrow slits 28 cut along the longitudinal axis of the distal end portion of the body. These slits provide the center portion the flexibility to expand around the implant head 105 to grip the implant and thus the slits permit branches 66a and 66b to be biased to a closed or gripping position. The center portion 64 forms the longest extension of the branch 66. Front rigid side portions ~~60a, 60b~~ 61a, 61b extend from the distal end portion 24b of the body along the center portion and terminate a distance from the distal tip of the center portion. The back rigid side portions 62a, 62b also extend from the distal end portion of the body and terminate just before the distal end of the center portion. The front and back rigid side portions 61~~60~~, 62 form a substantially U-shaped recess to accommodate a spinal rod and spinal implant head. The distance ~~d.sub.f~~ from the distal end of the center portion 68 to the distal end of the front rigid side portion 61~~60~~ is of sufficient length to allow the head of a spinal implant to pass through the channel to accommodate a side approach to gripping the spinal implant with the tool. The back rigid side portions 62 act as a stop to prevent the tool from completely passing over the spinal implant as the tool is gripping the implant from the side.

Please replace paragraph [0031] with the following amended paragraph:

[0031] Preferably the interior surface 67 of each center portion 64 has a projection 69 for engaging a corresponding recess 103 located on the head of the spinal implant. Preferably a pin 63 projects from the interior surface 65 of the front rigid side portion 61~~60~~. The pin 63 acts as a stop engaging the top surface 109 of the implant to prevent the tool from sliding down over the entire spinal implant when using the tool to grip the implant from above. FIG. 5A shows a cross-sectional view of the body 20 from the distal end. This view shows the

interior channel 21 of the body and depicts the placement of the pins 63 and projections 69.